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FM AMCONSUL KARACHI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0939  
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0401  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0228  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0271  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1816  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 2665  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 4548  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KARACHI 000068

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT - PARA 6)

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2019  
TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [PK](#)  
SUBJECT: KARACHI - CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY FRUSTRATED BY  
TSA INACTION AND VISA ISSUES

REF: 08 KARACHI 344

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Classified By: Classified by Consul General Stephen G. Fakan  
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Deputy Director General Sajid Habib told EconOff on February 13 that Pakistan's airline industry wanted a response from the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) to an industry request to fly direct flights to the U.S. He invited U.S. carriers to resume operations in Pakistan, as he claimed British Airways and Lufthansa plan to do in the summer, and expressed frustration with the difficulty in receiving U.S. visas for airline employees. He also outlined the CAA's future restructuring program. End summary.

Waiting for Direct Flights to the U.S.  
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¶2. (SBU) At a February 13 meeting at the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in Karachi, Deputy Director General Sajid Habib, an Air Vice Marshall, told EconOff that his agency wanted to see approval of direct Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flights to the U.S. Currently PIA has to stop in Manchester, England, before continuing on to the U.S. The stop in Manchester costs the airline money and passengers must undergo the inconvenience of a security prescreening (reftel). Habib noted that the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) visited Pakistan in 2008 on the issue, but the GOP had not heard anything further from them. He claimed Pakistan has "followed TSA's request for security enhancements" and would like further communication with the agency.

Call for U.S. Carrier Return to Pakistan  
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¶3. (SBU) Habib said he would like to see the return of American carriers to Pakistan, calling their presence "crucial to prosperity." He claimed that "PIA can't handle the (traffic) load alone." Habib relayed that British Airlines and Lufthansa, who suspended flights to Pakistan following the September 21, 2008, Islamabad Marriott bombing may restart service to Pakistan in the summer. He explained that Pakistan plans to provide restricted airport hotels for

aircrews as an enticement for international carriers to return. Habib seemed upset by the emergence of Dubai as a hub for flights to the Middle East and South Asia in lieu of Karachi. According to him, Pakistan plans to talk to China in April and Saudi Arabia in June about an Open Skies Agreement.

#### U.S. Visa Process Hurting Airline Industry

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¶4. (C) Habib lamented the slow visa processing for PIA aircraft members. He said Pakistani carriers buy U.S. aircraft and many pilots have to go to the U.S. once or twice a year for training as required by international agreements. According to Habib, some pilots wait a year for a visa. He said some of PIA's pilots have had to obtain waivers for overdue simulator training. Pakistan is scheduled for an ICAO inspection in 2010, however, and Habib is concerned the use of simulator waivers could bring criticism during their evaluation. Habib also mentioned that the CAA had declined an opportunity to buy radar and other equipment from a U.S. company because officials needed to visit the manufacturing facility and feared that they would not receive U.S. visas for the trip.

#### Restructuring

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¶5. (SBU) Manzar Jamal, CAA Director for Air Transportation, said the CAA is planning to restructure using South Korea and the 2006 International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Report on India as models. According to Jamal, the CAA will segment into three units - Regulatory, Air Navigation Services, and Airport Services. He said the CAA should complete its reorganization by February 2010.

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#### Comment

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¶6. (C) Pakistan clearly covets direct flights to the U.S. for both economic and prestige reasons. PIA Managing Director Mohammad Aijaz Haroon acknowledged to EconOff in December that Pakistan's refusal to share passenger lists for flights not going to the U.S. was a major stumbling block in obtaining direct routes to New York. At this point, TSA action on the issue has been encompassed within the scope of other DHS negotiations with the GOP. Pakistan and the EU signed a civil aviation agreement February 24 allowing all EU-based airlines to operate flights to Pakistan from any EU state with which the GOP already has an agreement, but it is unclear whether expansion of the legal authority to fly to Pakistan will equate with actual willingness to do so by EU airlines.

¶7. (C) Although the visa discussion focused on the U.S., Habib also noted that PIA pilots sometimes experience long waits for EU visas. The waits are further lengthened when visas for multiple countries are needed. Regardless of the veracity of Habib's claims, should an aircraft piloted by crewmembers with simulator waivers be involved in an incident where passengers are either killed or injured, the visa issue may well be trumpeted as a contributing factor.

FAKAN